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AUTHOR Comstock, Jamie; Strzyzewski, Krystyna
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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed prime time television programs for the presence of interpersonal predicaments, specifically family conflict and situations involving jealousy, envy, and rivalry. The portrayal of these situations was evaluated according to relevant pro- and antisocial criteria. A total of 17 one-hour episodes and 24 half-hour episodes were obtained, yielding 41 programs or 29 total hours of televised interaction. Programs were classified as either drama, situation comedy, or night time soap. Primary characters were involved in a total of 255 conflict situations across 41 episodes of prime time television. Situations involving jealousy, envy, or rivalry were less frequent than conflict, yet still common with a total of 88 instances of these predicaments depicted. Results indicated that family conflict and the expression of jealousy are quite common in prime time television relationships and predominantly depicted in a prosocial manner across situation comedies, family dramas, and night time soaps. Gender differences were prevalent within the televised interaction patterns. Results suggest that television portrayal of conflictual interaction presents a mixed bag of potential effects. While a prosocial model for mothers and wives responding to their husbands is presented, siblings, wives initiating conflict, and husbands in general are depicted as using antisocial styles of conflictual interaction. With regard to the portrayal of jealousy, envy, and rivalry, findings indicated that a romantic involvement is the greatest threat to the jealous person; envy was most often over another's relationship; and rivalry most frequently occurred to obtain a "person". (Four tables of data are included and 52 references are attached.) (MG)

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Prosocial and Antisocial Interaction on Television: Conflict and Jealousy on Prime Time

Jamie Comstock

Krystyna Strzyzewski

Department of Communication

University of Arizona

Tucson, Az 85721

602-621-1366

BITNET%"JAMIE@ARIZRVAX"

BITNET%"KRYSTYNA@ARIZRVAX"

Running head: FAMILY CONFLICT AND JEALOUSY ON PRIME TIME

Biographical note: Jamie Comstock (M.S., 1985, Illinois State University) and Krystyna Strzyzewski (M.S., 1987, Illinois State University), are doctoral candidates in the Department of Communication, University of Arizona.

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Prosocial and Antisocial Interaction on Television:

Conflict and Jealousy on Prime Time

Abstract

Prime time television programs were analyzed for the presence of interpersonal predicaments, specifically family conflict and situations involving jealousy, envy, and rivalry. The portrayal of these situations was evaluated according to relevant pro and antisocial criteria. Findings suggest that the predicaments are common in television relationships and predominantly depicted in a prosocial manner across situation comedies, family dramas, and night time soaps. However, gender differences are prevalent within the televised interaction patterns. In addition, the frequency of these predicaments varies across program type.

Prosocial and Antisocial Interaction on Television: Conflict and Jealousy on Prime Time

Researchers concerned with the influence of television content on the perceptions and ensuing interpersonal interaction patterns of television viewers seem to be vigilantly devoted to determining the magnitude and direction of the television impact. More specifically, questions revolve around two major themes: 1) When and to what degree will television viewing serve as a source of influence? and 2) Will the television impact primarily be prosocial or antisocial? With these two issues in mind, this paper argues that television has high potential to impact interaction in close personal relationships. In addition, evidence is provided that, contrary to popular opinion, the quality of the television message may be predominantly prosocial.

Television as a Source of Influence

Direct experience, indirect experience, and observation of symbolic behavior constitute the three major influences on interpersonal behavior (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963; Weaver & Wakshlag, 1986). As would be expected, when comparing these sources of influences, Roloff and Greenberg (1980) found that television was a relatively weak source of influence on behavior. However, Weaver and Wakshlag (1986) suggested that when direct experience is lacking or ambiguous, social perceptions are formed and reinforced by lower order influences such as television messages. So it seems that even though direct experience may be an individual's primary source of information about relational interaction, such information is supplemented by observing interactions on television (e.g., Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980, 1986; Greenberg, Hines, Buerkel-Rothfusse & Atkin, 1980; Dail & Way, 1985; Jeffres, 1986).

Many have reported that viewers make use of information garnered through viewing entertainment television, particularly when the situations they experience are similar to those enacted by the television characters (Dail & Way, 1985; Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Gerbner et al., 1986; LoSciuto, 1972). In such cases, the behavior of the television characters may serve as "advice" and increase the viewers' repertoire of behaviors. Moreover, as Meyrowitz (1985) aptly explained, television exposes people to many "backstage" behaviors which they would not otherwise observe. Portrayal of this backstage behavior provides opportunities for viewers to learn about the possible private emotions and motivations of role occupants. This depiction provides a unique opportunity to increase understanding of others' perspectives and the ability to predict how others may behave in similar real life situations. As such, observation of backstage behavior has a high potential for impact on interpersonal interaction.

Both social learning theory (Bandura, 1971) and cultivation theory (eg. Gerbner, et al., 1980, 1986) supported the premise that observation of interaction between television characters has the potential to influence viewers' stereotypes, role learning, aggression, and world views. Not suprisingly then, there is considerable concern about the quality of the television message with regard to appropriate and effective behavior during interpersonal interaction. (e.g., Abelman, 1986; Comstock & Haefner, 1989; Dail & Way, 1985; Gerbner et al., 1980, 1986; Gunter & Svennevig, 1987; Haefner & Comstock, 1988a, 1988b; Skill, Robinson & Wallace, 1987).

Quality of the Television Message

Some research, especially the studies of violence and aggression, indicates that television messages are primarily antisocial (e.g., Gerbner, et al., 1980, 1986; Greenberg, Edison, Korzenny, Fernandez-Collado, & Atkin, 1980). Moreover, Potter & Ware (1987) reported that not only do characters commit a great deal of antisocial behavior, this behavior is portrayed as justified and rewarding. Some suggest that the effects of these antisocial behaviors are minimal because viewers rarely are involved in situations similar to most antisocial scenarios on television (e.g. espionage, conspiracy, blackmail). However, the findings mentioned above are particularly alarming when considering Meyrowitz's (1985) argument that viewers "identify with those television characters who are successful and rewarded rather than those who are simply labeled similarly to them" (p.214). Further, when the rewarding antisocial acts involve common experiences (like family conflict or the experience of jealousy) the potential for identification is magnified (Gerbner, et al., 1986).

Although many assume that television messages do not vary across genre (Gerbner et al., 1980, 1986; Hirsch, 1982), there is evidence to suggest otherwise. Hawkins and Pingree (1981) concluded that the cultivation of television violence was greater when the programs viewed were action/adventure rather than situation comedies. Greenberg, Atkin, Edison & Korzenny (1977) also reported genre differences. When studying conflict resolution behaviors, they found that situation comedies include high instances of verbally aggressive behavior, which although less extreme than the violent acts on action/adventure programs, are still considered antisocial. Interestingly, situation comedies also included numerous forms of prosocial behavior including self-disclosure,

altruism, and expression of feelings. Unlike action/adventures and situation comedies, characters in family dramas primarily use prosocial behaviors to resolve conflict (Greenberg et al., 1977). Because there are many prosocial messages on television dramas, the reception of these messages may not be impeded by a presence of antisocial behaviors. Even though the predominant mode of interaction on situation comedies and especially on family dramas, is less antisocial than on action/adventures, they may have greater potential to affect viewers, because the plotlines may reflect more common relational experiences.

The aforementioned literature suggests that the quality of the interpersonal interaction portrayed on television message may vary across program type. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to systematically investigate the interpersonal interaction present within the latent content - the subtle messages independent of the plot - of television programs (McLeod, Fitzpatrick, Glynn & Fallis, 1982). By simultaneously searching for the prosocial and antisocial message within this latent content, this analysis assesses the overall quality of interpersonal interaction depicted by television characters across genre. Specifically, this project focuses on two commonly experienced interpersonal predicaments: family conflict and the experience and expression of jealousy.

Conflict in Interpersonal Relationships

Conflict, an inevitable and necessary element in the development of family relationships (Straus, 1974), occurs between family members as a result of incompatible goals or violations of relational expectations. Family conflict has been the focus of numerous research efforts which revealed that conflict affects relational satisfaction and distinguishes distressed families from non-distressed families (for reviews see Ellis, 1987; Galvin & Brommel, 1986; Kelley, 1987;

Peterson, 1983; Sillars & Weisberg, 1987). However, it is not the potential for conflict or even the presence of conflict that characterizes family relationships as distressed. Rather, it is how family members interact during conflictual situations which determines the quality of their relationship (Galvin & Brommel, 1986; Montemayor, 1986).

The style of conflictual interaction adopted by a family also affects the self-esteem of all family members. Gegas and Schwalbe (1986) reported that parental support, interest, participation, and respect (autonomy granting) were positively related to the self-esteem of their children. Demo, Small and Savin-Williams (1987) reported similar findings for the effect of parental interaction on child's self-esteem and also child's interaction style on parent's self-esteem. Montemayor (1986) suggests that, in general, parents who adopt a flexible style of conflict management, which encourages independence yet demonstrates interest in the child, have children with high levels of self-esteem, moral development, autonomy, school success, and an absence of behavior problems. However, parents' use of extreme styles -- either too authoritarian or too permissive -- leads to a broad spectrum of behavioral problems and family strife. Clearly the manner in which families interact during conflict characterizes these important relationships and can affect how family members feel about themselves and their relationships with other family members. For this reason, all sources with potential to influence the use of conflict strategies within the family merit attention, including television.

Conflict Strategies

Galvin and Brommel (1986) described three types of family conflict which reflect distinct conflict outcomes. These outcomes can be linked to the use of

different conflict strategies. First, constructive outcomes, those which facilitate relational growth and development, require the use of integrative strategies. Integrative strategies produce constructive outcomes because they illustrate cooperation and a willingness to disclose (Sillars, Coletti, Parry & Rogers, 1982). Often labeled prosocial, integrative strategies promote relational growth and maintenance (Roloff, 1976) and a neutral or positive climate (Sillars, 1980). Integrative strategies include: emphasizing commonalities, accepting responsibility, initiating problem solving, showing empathy or support, and soliciting and disclosing information relevant to the conflict (Sillars, et al., 1982).

Second, destructive outcomes result from a power struggle and negatively impact the quality of the family relationship. This type of conflict involves the use of distributive strategies. Distributive strategies are destructive in that they "entail competition and reflect the primacy of personal over relational goals" (Canary & Cupach, 1988, p. 306). These strategies, which are considered anti-social (Roloff, 1976), involve blaming, negative evaluations of one's partner and attempts to induce unilateral behavioral change from the partner (Sillars, 1980). Examples of distributive strategies include: hostile questioning, hostile joking, avoiding responsibility for the conflict, making prescriptions for the other's behavior, and personal rejection (Sillars, et al, 1982).

Third, unresolved conflict usually results in psychological and/or physical estrangement. When issues are unresolveable (Fitzpatrick, Fallis & Vance, 1982) or unimportant, it may be prudent for family members to avoid discussing them. However, most conflict which is avoided leaves nagging tensions unresolved,

creates a climate ripe for future destructive conflict, and fosters separation among family members (Galvin & Brommel, 1986). The strategies associated with unresolved conflict are avoidance strategies. Avoidance strategies are attempts to minimize communication about the conflict by ignoring the conflict completely or by addressing the conflictual issue indirectly or ambiguously. When avoidance strategies are employed to avoid unresolvable or unimportant conflict, they could be considered prosocial. However, in most cases, avoidance strategies are considered antisocial. Examples of avoidance strategies include; pretending to be hurt by the other person, postponing the issue, shifting the topic, denying that the conflict is present, and focusing on the meaning of or appropriateness of words used by the other person (Sillars, et al. 1982).

Use of strategies. Recent research indicates that all members of a family may employ any of the three strategies mentioned above, regardless of the role relationships involved in the conflict. Vuchinich (1987) found that social structure and role relationships bring about the end of some conflict, "but most conflicts were allowed to run their course without submission, compromise or withdrawal" (p.600). Nonetheless, there is still reason to believe that, due to the confounding nature of affect, the rules associated with role definitions and the power structure inherent to family relationships, children will be deferent to their parents in conflict. Vuchinich (1984) suggested that when parents (especially fathers) use oppositional moves which challenge the children's self-image (distributive strategies), children are not likely to respond with similar oppositional moves. Recent research involving older adolescents, however, suggests that as children grow older and more independent, the generational distinctions in strategy use dissipates (Comstock & Buller, 1990). In contrast,

when children (especially boys) interact with other children, they are likely to respond with distributive strategies. When parents respond to children, however, they are likely to employ less direct oppositional moves such as integrative or avoidance strategies (Vuchinich, 1984). In marital relationships, all spouses are likely to reciprocate integrative strategies; however, reciprocating distributive strategies is a sign of marital distress (Pike & Sillars, 1985).

Conflict on Television

Previous research on conflictual interaction between television characters indicates that, although conflict on television occurred within all family relationships, it occurred most frequently between marital pairs or sibling relationships involving a brother (Greenberg, Beurkel-Rothfuss, Neuendorf & Atkin, 1980). Greenberg, et al. classified interaction according to one of three modes: (1) going toward someone; (2) going against someone; and, (3) going away from someone, which are akin to the integrative, distributive and avoidance strategies mentioned above. They found that parents and spouses are likely to be supportive when interacting with each other and the children. However, they did not make specific observations regarding the use of these modes during conflictual interaction. This project was designed to make such observations and evaluate the nature of the conflictual interaction presented on prime time television.

Jealousy in Interpersonal Relationships

Jealousy, a commonly experienced, complex, and volatile human emotion, occurs as "the result of a partner's extradyadic relationship that is real, imagined, or considered likely to occur" (Bringle & Buunk, 1985, p. 242). Duck (1986) described jealousy as a blend of feelings that, depending on the situation, may

include feeling hurt, aroused, excited or angry. The underlying theme, however, is the perceived loss of influence over another person. As such, jealousy predicaments ignite individuals' needs to restore self-esteem and regain control over the relationship and their partners' feelings.

Envy and rivalry are similar psychological processes, which should be distinguished from jealousy. Envy involves the desire to obtain something that someone else possesses; rivalry is a competition for something that neither one possesses; whereas, jealousy involves a threat to an existing relationship. All three are motivational processes, which stimulate efforts to obtain goals: "we try hard to protect what we have, make every effort to obtain something we want that someone else has, and compete with others to get something that neither of us possesses and both of us want" (Brehm, 1985, p. 261).

Various factors influence the emotional experience that occurs during these predicaments. In jealousy, threats may involve friendly involvements of the same or opposite sex, and exclusion due to the partner's time away/work/hobby, etc. In envy, the object of one's desire (goal) may be a relationship, position/status, material possession, or another's personal characteristics/skills/abilities. In rivalry, two individuals may be vying for a person, material possession, or position (e.g., work, social or political).

Regardless of the emotional stimulus, jealousy, envy and rivalry have great potential to affect individuals and their interpersonal relationships. Constantine (1977) found that the experience of such emotions can lead to: (1) loss of face, status, or ego-enhancement; (2) loss of need gratification; (3) loss of control over partner, one's life, or power in the relationship; (4) loss of predictability, dependability of the partner's behavior; (5) loss of privacy,

territory, or exclusive access; and (6) loss of actual time with the partner. As with conflict, however, it is how the jealousy, envy and rivalry are enacted that determines whether they will have a facilitative or debilitative affect on the individuals and relationships involved. By learning and following social norms for the appropriate expression of jealousy, envy and rivalry, people may be able to minimize the aversive impact of these situations on their relationships.

In the late seventies, Clanton and Smith (1977) reported that social norms for dealing with jealousy, envy and rivalry vary according to gender. Specifically, they found that men were more likely to: (1) deny feelings; (2) express jealousy through rage and violence; (3) focus on the sexual activity of the partner; and (4) become competitive toward the third party. Women, on the other hand were more likely to: (1) acknowledge jealous feelings; (2) focus on the emotional involvement of the partner; (3) internalize the cause of jealousy; and (4) cling to the partner (Clanton & Smith, 1977). Unfortunately, Clanton and Smith did not report how these modes of expression affected the relationship. In a more recent study, Strzyzewski and Comstock (1990) found considerable similarity between the way men and women experience and express jealousy. However, they reported that males were more likely to simply accept the threatening behavior from a male friend while females experiencing jealousy due to a male friend, were more likely to discuss the situation with that friend. Nonetheless, they found that both males and females were likely to engage in one of four responses: 1) rational discussion; 2) increased independence; 3) ventilate feelings to some one other than partner; and, 4) acceptance. The subtle gender differences reported by Strzyzewski and Comstock may be indicative of changing sex role expectations. Instead of sex typed behavior, they found that norms for acceptable expression of

jealousy vary across relationship type. Strzyzewski and Comstock (1990) reported that, even though friends and romantics in their study experienced jealousy at the same degree of intensity, social norms rendered the expression of jealousy more appropriate for romantic partners than friends. It seems that social norms associated with relational types and changing sex role expectations may mediate the evaluations and attributions made of persons' emotional behavior, and hence, moderate relational outcomes during jealousy, envy, or rivalry predicaments. Because entertainment television impacts the establishment of such social norms, the latent messages laced within televised portrayals of these emotions warrants investigation. This project represents an initial attempt to explore and evaluate the emotional and behavioral responses to jealousy, envy, and rivalry on prime time television.

Methods

Data Set

During two consecutive weeks in the 1987-88 programming season, all prime time major network entertainment programs known to have family and close personal relationships as primary to the plot were videotaped and constitute the data set for this analysis. Twenty-three different programs were represented in this analysis. Two episodes of 18 programs were obtained. Because of network program schedule changes, only one episode was obtained for five of the programs. A total of 17 one hour episodes and 24 half hour episodes were obtained yielding 41 programs or 29 total hours of televised interaction. Programs were classified by genre as either drama (n=4), situation comedy (n=16) or night time soap (n=4). This data set represented 100% of the available programs of interest and constituted 23% of the total prime time programming during this two week period.

Units of Analysis

The use of conflict strategies, and the experience and expression of jealousy, envy, and rivalry were coded. The coding unit was any complete or incomplete verbalization or nonverbal expression which met the operational definitions of conflict, jealousy, envy or rivalry and was initiated by any of the primary program characters. Coding units were classified as conflict strategies if they expressed the recognition of incompatible personal goals or violations of relational expectations. Coders were instructed to consider the first conflict strategy used in a scene as the initiation of a conflict situation and the last conflict strategy used in the same scene as the end of the conflict situation. Each conflict situation was coded for: (1) character initiating the conflict; (2) character responding to the conflict; (3) relationship between the characters; (4) number of strategies used by both characters; (5) type of strategies used by both characters. Sillars et al.'s (1982) typology of conflict strategies was employed to identify the types of conflict strategies used by the characters.

Coding units were classified as: (1) jealousy if they expressed the tension related to a perceived threat to an existing relationship; (2) envy, if they expressed the desire to obtain something that someone else possessed; and (3) rivalry, if two characters expressed the desire to obtain something that neither one possessed. Each jealousy situation was coded for: (1) character experiencing the jealousy; (2) the relational partner; (3) the nature of the threat to the relationship; (4) the emotions expressed by the jealous character; (5) the behavioral responses of the jealous character; and (6) the overall effect that jealousy had on the relationship. Each envy and rivalry situation was coded for: (1) characters involved in the situation; (2) the nature of the goal; (3) the

emotions expressed by the envious or rivalrous characters; (4) the behavioral responses of the envious or rivalrous characters; and (5) the overall effect that envy or rivalry had on the relationship. The typology of emotional experience and types of behavioral responses used in this analysis were derived from previous research (Strzyzewski, 1987).

Coder Training

A group of 36 undergraduate students served as coders for this project. The students were randomly assigned to one of six groups. Three groups coded conflict on either ABC, CBS, or NBC. Three other groups coded jealousy, envy, and rivalry on either ABC, NBC, or CBS.

Coders were trained to apply the respective coding schemes using examples from prime time programming. Conflict coders were trained to recognize conflict strategies using examples from Kate and Allie. Jealousy, envy, and rivalry coders were trained using examples from Knott's Landing. Coders viewed one episode of the programs and obtained intersubjective agreement for the elements in the coding schemes. The episodes were divided equally within the group and coded independently. In order to obtain reliability ratings, 20 percent of the programs were coded twice by separate coders (agreements/agreements + disagreements). Intercoder reliability was .94 for number of conflict situations; .91 for type of conflict strategy used, .83 for number of jealousy, envy and rivalry situations; and, coders were in complete agreement concerning the effect of jealousy, envy and rivalry on the relationships involved.

Results

Conflict

Total Sample. Primary characters were involved in a total of 255 conflict situations across 41 episodes of prime time television. The average number of conflict situations per hour of programming was 8.79. The majority of the instances of conflict occurred in situation comedies (141, 55.3%), rather than either night time soaps (65, 25.5%) or dramas (49, 19.2) (X^2 (2) = 56.83, $p < .05$). The average number of conflict situations per hour of programming in situation comedies was 11.75; night time soaps averaged 8.12 per hour; and family dramas averaged 5.44 per hour. A total of 833 conflict strategies were used by characters in these programs. Nearly half (388, 46.6%) were distributive strategies, 32.5% (271) were integrative strategies and 20.9% were avoidance strategies. Although genre differences for frequency of conflict situations were apparent, there were no significant differences in the type of strategies used across genre.

Length of conflictual interaction. Overall, 41% of the conflict situations involved more than one turn at talk per character. Conflictual interactions on night time soaps lasted longer than conflictual interactions on situation comedies or family dramas (X^2 (6) = 38.1, $p < .05$). Of the 65 conflictual interactions on soaps, 64% lasted longer than one turn per character; of the 49 interactions on family drama, 37% lasted longer than one turn; of the 141 interactions on situation comedies, 24% lasted longer than one turn.

Overall, females were involved in more conflictual situations than males (272 females, 223 males). A nearly equal number of females and males took more than one turn during conflictual interaction on family dramas and night time soaps.

However, on situation comedies, 39% of females took more than one turn, while only 14% of males took more than one turn.

Family Role. The most frequently occurring televised conflict involved the parent-child role relationship. Thirty percent (30%) of the conflict situations involved parents and children; 19% involved husbands and wives; and, 13% involved siblings. Of this 13%, 50% involved the brother-sister relationship; 40% involved brother to brother interaction; and, 10% involved sister to sister interaction. Stepfamily relationships accounted for only 7% of all conflictual interactions. Interaction with an ex-spouse accounted for 2%. The remaining 29% involved various other relationships such as grandparents, peers and others (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

When wives initiated conflict with their husbands, they used distributive strategies 50% of the time. Husbands responded to their wives' most often with avoidance strategies (50%) followed by distributive (27.3%) and integrative strategies (22.3%). Husbands also most often employed distributive strategies when initiating conflict (48%). Wives responded to their husbands' most often with integrative strategies (48.0%), followed by distributive strategies (40.0%) and avoidance strategies (12.0%) (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 about here

Moms initiating conflict with their children commonly used integrative strategies (45%), while fathers most often used distributive strategies (50.0%). When responding to their parents, children in generally were equally as likely to

use integrative, distributive, or avoidance strategies. However, sons most often responded to both parents with integrative strategies (46.1% for moms and 50.0% with dads) while daughters most often responded to mothers with avoidance strategies (55.5%) and to fathers with distributive strategies (66.7%). Constructive integrative strategies were the least likely to be used by daughters responding to moms (16.7%) or dads (16.6%) (see Table 2).

The majority of the time when initiating conflict, both brothers and sisters employed distributive strategies (84.3% and 84.6% respectively). However, when responding to their male siblings, brothers most often used avoidance strategies (76.9%) while when responding to female siblings, brothers used integrative strategies most often (50.0%). Sisters, on the other hand, most often used distributive strategies with brothers (50.0%) and sisters (66.7%) (see Table 2).

Jealousy

Total Sample. Situations involving jealousy, envy or rivalry were less frequent than conflict, yet still common during the 29 hours of programming coded. A total of 88 instances of these predicaments were depicted, including: 43 instances of jealousy (48.9%); 25 instances of envy (28.4%); and 20 instances of rivalry (22.7%). As with conflict, the frequency of these situations varied across genre. They were most common on night time soaps (38, or 43.2%), followed by situation comedies (34, 38.6%), and dramas (16, 18.2%) (X^2 (1) = 8.77, $p < .05$). The average number of instances per hour on situation comedies was 2.8; dramas depicted 1.7 per hour; and, night time soaps contained 4.2 per hour.

The overall effect of the emotional predicament on the characters' relationships was more often helpful "facilitative" (48, 54.5%) rather than harmful or "debilitative" (38, 43.2%). However, the effect of these predicaments

varied depending on the type of situation involved. Jealousy and envy often led to facilitative outcomes; whereas, rivalry was typically depicted as debilitative and harmful to the relationship (X^2 (2) = 5.81, $p < .05$). Interestingly, the effect of these predicaments on the relationships of the characters was not significantly different across genre. Likewise, the cause (threat or goal) which stimulated the predicament did not differ significantly across program type.

Gender and Relationship. Females were predominant, as both the initiator or primary character expressing the emotion (52, 59.2%) and the relational partner involved (47, 53.4%). Males, on the other hand, comprised 39.8% (35) of initiators and 44.3% (39) of partners. The nature of the relationship between characters was most often romantic (20, 22.7%), followed by same-sex friends (17, or 19.3%), parent-child (13, 14.8%) and others (see Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

Causes and Response to the Predicaments. The threat to the relationship in instances of jealousy was most often a "romantic involvement" (17, 39.5%) followed by "situation" (10, 23.3%), same-sex friendly involvement (9, 20.9%), and opposite sex friendly involvement (7, 16.3%). In envy and rivalry situations, the goal was more likely to be a "relationship" (15, 33.3%), or a "person" (15, 33.3%), followed by a social, political or work related "position" (22.3, 11.4%). When controlling for the partner's gender and type of emotion experienced, a chi-square revealed a significant difference between the initiator's gender and the reason for emotion in jealousy situation. For male-male dyads, a same-sex friendly involvement was the most common threat (5, 62%),

followed by romantic involvement (2, 25%), and opposite-sex friendly involvment (1, 12.5%). In contrast, for female-male dyads, the most common reasons for jealousy were romantic involvement (6, 40%) and situational threat (6, 40%) followed by opposite-sex friendly involvement (3, 20%) (X^2 (3)= 13.8, $p < .05$). No other emotion X gender differences were found in this analysis.

Most of these aversive predicaments involved at least two sequential emotional responses (71, 80%). The first response was typically "hurt" (25, 28.6%) or "shocked/surprised" (15, 17.0%). Secondary responses were most often "betrayed" (12, 13.6%), or "envious" (10, 11.4%). Sixty-five percent of characters also displayed a third emotional response which, unlike the preceding self-directed emotions, seem to revolve around the relationship. These included feeling "excluded" (12, 13.6%), followed by "possessive" (9, 10.2%) and "competitive" (see Table 4 for a complete array of these responses).

The first behavioral response by the initiator was most often "sarcasm" (10, 11.4%), followed by "rational discussion" (9, 10.2%) and "ventilate feelings" (9, 10.2%). Secondary responses followed a similar pattern: "sarcasm" (13, 14.8%); "ventilate feelings" (9, 10.2%); and rational discussion (7, 8%). Although third responses varied considerably, the most common third responses, were "acceptance" (6, 6.8) and "seek information" (6, 6.8%) (See Table 4 for a complete array of these responses).

Insert Table 4 about here

The witness for the responses was most frequently the opposite character, or partner (54, 61.4%) rather than an uninvolved third party (20, 22%) or no one at all (10, 11.4%). The character involved in the instances of emotion was most

likely to first respond as being either "angry" (6, 6.8%), or interestingly, "happy" (6, 6.8%). The most common secondary responses involved anger (5, 5.7%) or competitiveness (5, 5.7%). The third response was primarily "competitive" (6, 6.8%) (see Table 4). Partners often displayed no overt behavioral response to the initiators' expression of jealousy, envy or rivalry (see Table 4).

Discussion

The results of this content analysis suggest that family conflict and the expression of jealousy are quite common on prime time television. However, the overall portrayal of these predicaments is not predominantly antisocial. So, if, as many assume, television advises viewers or increases their repertoire of behaviors, the effects may be prosocial. Although the presence of these interpersonal predicaments varies in amount across genre, there is no significant difference in the way they are depicted. Therefore, as cultivation theory suggests, the television message is generally consistent across program type.

Regarding the portrayal of conflict on prime time television, there is a significant difference in the number of conflictual interactions and the length of these interactions across genre. Specifically, conflict is most prevalent on situation comedies and least prevalent on family dramas. However, conflict on situation comedies is very brief, rarely lasting more than one turn per character. In contrast, most conflict portrayed on night time soaps involves several turns per character. Perhaps the limited number of turns on situation comedies is due to the time constraints of half hour segments or to the comedic value of a "one-liner". Nonetheless, types of conflict strategies used did not significantly vary across genre. There were, however, interesting gender and role relationship differences in the use of strategies. Generally, female characters

in all program types engaged in more conflict than male characters. On situation comedies, women were not only involved in more conflictual situations, those conflicts lasted longer than conflicts involving males. Additionally, conflicts initiated by wives were most often portrayed as antisocial. Wives initiated the conflict using distributive strategies and husbands responded with avoidance or distributive strategies which represent the pattern of behavior common to distressed, real-life couples (Pike & Sillars, 1985). On the other hand, conflict initiated by husbands is portrayed in a more prosocial manner. When initiating conflict with their wives, husbands used distributive strategies, yet their wives responded with integrative strategies which show support, de-escalate the conflict, and hence result in constructive outcomes. Females in the mother role, however, were portrayed more favorably than wives, husbands or fathers. Similar to Greenberg et al.'s (1980) report, sibling conflicts most often involved brothers. However, this analysis reveals that brothers and sisters both used an overwhelming majority of antisocial, distributive strategies.

These results suggest that television portrayal of conflictual interaction presents a mixed bag of potential effects. While a prosocial model for mothers and wives responding to their husbands is presented, siblings, wives initiating conflict, and husbands in general are depicted as using antisocial styles of conflictual interaction.

With regard to the portrayal of jealousy, envy, and rivalry on prime time television, this investigation suggests that: (1) a romantic involvement is the greatest threat to the jealous person; (2) envy was most often over another's relationship; and (3) rivalry most frequently occurred to obtain a "person". Consistent with Duck's (1986) conceptualization, jealousy and these related

emotions were depicted as a blend of feelings which may be expressed in a variety of ways. Sarcasm and rational discussion were the most frequent behavioral responses to the experience of the emotions. Congruent with sex role expectations of the early seventies, more females than males were found to express their emotions, particularly those that indicate vulnerability (i.e., jealousy and envy). When combined with the fact that recent investigations of jealousy in real-life found few gender differences (Strzyzewski and Comstock, 1990), this finding suggests that television may not be the predominant influence on social behavior in jealousy predicaments.

In opposite sex dyads, both females and males expressed jealousy over their partners' romantic involvements. However, in same-sex female dyads, rivalry over a person was most frequently occurring emotion. Contrary to real-life, in same-sex male dyads, jealousy over a same-sex friendly involvement was most predominant, followed by envy or rivalry over a position or possession. Finally, the overall effect of jealousy and envy on the relationship was portrayed as prosocial, while rivalry was portrayed as more debilitative to the relationship or antisocial.

Abelman (1986) maintained that while there may be a "relatively equal amount of antisocial and prosocial behavior on television, prosocial fare is not as visually stimulating or identifiable in the context of a program as is antisocial fare" (p.55). As a result, the prosocial supportive acts, which actually out numbered the antisocial acts in this study and others (Gunter & Svennevig, 1987), may: (a) be overshadowed by the more explicit antisocial behaviors; (b) go unnoticed by viewers; and (c) thereby decrease the potential for learning prosocial interaction patterns through observation of the interaction portrayed

by television characters.

Obviously, the next step in this research effort involves an attempt to correlate television content with real-life interaction. While considering the potential effect of television messages on viewers is interesting and important, researchers should keep in mind that the impact of television on the viewer is mediated by the viewers' motivation for watching (Carveth & Alexander, 1985), the similarity of viewers' perceived reality to television content (Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Potter, 1980), whether or not the viewer considers the characters' behavior as appropriate and effective, and, whether or not the viewer actually perceives the prosocial messages laced within the latent content of televised interaction.

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Table 1

Role of Character Involved in Conflict Situations

INITIATOR	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTAGE
mom	32	12.5
husband	25	09.8
wife	23	09.0
brother	19	07.5
daughter	17	06.7
sister	16	06.3
son	14	05.5
peer	14	05.5
dad	13	05.1
stepdaughter	5	02.0
stepdad	5	02.0
stepsister	5	02.0
grandpa	4	01.5
stepbrother	3	01.1
exhusband	3	01.1
ex-wife	3	01.1
grandchild	2	01.0
other	52	20.3
total	255	100.0

The "other" category includes inlaws, extended family members, difficult to label characters such as stepfathers who also are uncles, and Alf.

Table 2

Strategies Used By Initiators and Responders in Conflict Situations

INITIATOR	STRATEGY	RESPONDER mom	dad	son	daughter	brother	sister	spouse
mom	45.1 integrative			46.1	16.7			
(32)	22.6 distributive			38.5	27.8			
	32.3 avoidance			15.4	55.5			
dad	33.3 integrative			50.0	16.6			
(13)	50.0 distributive			16.7	66.7			
	16.7 avoidance			33.3	16.7			
son	57.2 integrative	40.0	33.3					
(14)	21.4 distributive	60.0	66.7					
	21.4 avoidance	00.0	00.0					
daugh-	33.3 integrative	00.0	50.0					
ter	40.0 distributive	83.3	20.0					
(17)	26.7 avoidance	16.7	30.0					
brother	05.2 integrative					15.4	16.7	
(19)	84.3 distributive					07.7	50.0	
	10.5 avoidance					76.9	33.3	
sister	07.7 integrative					50.0	33.3	
(16)	84.6 distributive					40.0	66.7	
	07.7 avoidance					10.0	00.0	
husband	24.0 integrative							48.0
(25)	48.0 distributive							40.0
	28.0 avoidance							12.0
wife	22.7 integrative							22.3
(23)	50.0 distributive							27.3
	27.3 avoidance							50.0

Numbers in parentheses are frequencies. All other numbers are percentages. All figures based on first strategy used by both the initiator and responder in the conflict situations.

Table 3

Relationship Between Characters Involved in Jealousy, Envy and Rivalry

Relationship	Frequency	Percentage
romantic partner	20	22.7
same-sex friend	17	19.3
parent-child	17	19.3
acquaintance	13	14.8
opposite-sex friend	3	03.4
sibling	3	03.4
step-sibling	2	02.3
coworker	1	01.1
other	12	13.7
total	88	100.0

The "other" category includes inlaws, extended family members, difficult to label characters such as stepfathers who also are uncles, and Alf.

Table 4

Emotional Responses to Jealousy, Envy and Rivalry

	CHARACTER AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSE SEQUENCE					
	INITIATOR			PARTNER		
EMOTIONAL RESPONSE	First	Second	Third	First	Second	Third
hurt	28.6	00.0	01.1	04.5	00.0	01.1
shocked	17.0	06.8	03.5	01.1	01.1	01.1
betrayed	11.4	13.6	01.1	03.4	00.0	01.1
angry	06.8	08.0	07.0	06.8	05.7	00.0
happy	06.8	01.1	00.0	06.8	00.0	00.0
competitive	06.8	04.5	10.2	01.1	05.7	06.8
jealous	05.7	05.7	02.3	01.1	00.0	00.0
depressed	03.4	09.0	00.0	01.1	02.3	00.0
envious	03.4	11.4	03.4	04.5	02.3	00.0
possessive	02.3	02.3	10.2	04.5	01.1	01.1
guilty	02.3	01.1	01.1	03.4	01.1	00.0
afraid	01.1	01.1	02.3	00.0	01.1	01.1
empathetic	01.1	03.4	01.1	00.0	04.5	00.0
inadequate	01.1	04.5	09.1	00.0	00.0	01.1
excluded	01.1	04.5	13.6	00.0	00.0	01.1
ashamed	01.1	03.4	00.0	00.0	01.1	01.1
no response	00.0	20.6	34.0	61.7	74.0	84.4
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4
Behavioral Responses to Jealousy, Envy and Rivalry

BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE	CHARACTER AND BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE SEQUENCE: INITIATOR First	INITIATOR Second	INITIATOR Third	PARTNER First	PARTNER Second	PARTNER Third
sarcasm	11.4	14.8	04.5	05.7	02.3	00.0
ventilate	10.2	10.2	03.4	01.1	03.4	03.4
discussion	10.2	08.0	04.5	02.3	00.0	01.1
acceptance	06.8	04.5	06.8	03.4	00.0	01.1
seek info	06.8	03.4	06.8	00.0	02.3	01.1
confront threat	06.8	04.5	03.4	02.3	03.4	02.3
deny to other	04.5	00.0	00.0	00.0	01.1	01.1
joking	03.4	06.8	03.4	02.3	02.3	00.0
avoid issue	03.4	01.1	02.3	03.4	02.3	00.0
deny to self	03.4	02.3	03.4	02.3	00.0	00.0
badmouth threat	03.4	06.8	02.3	02.3	01.1	02.3
drink	03.4	03.4	04.5	00.0	01.1	00.0
avoid other	02.3	01.1	01.1	00.0	01.1	01.1
> independence	02.3	02.3	03.4	00.0	03.4	00.0
make self appealing	02.3	01.1	03.4	00.0	01.1	01.1
end relationship	01.1	02.3	03.4	00.0	00.0	00.0
make other jealous	01.1	00.0	01.1	00.0	00.0	00.0
other	10.4	10.4	01.1	06.8	00.0	02.3
no expression	06.8	17.0	41.2	68.1	72.7	80.7
total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%